

COMMUNITY VISIONING

Community Visioning Summary

Community Visioning Overview

In an effort to obtain community input into the development of reinvestment recommendations, two Community Visioning workshops were conducted in Cluster 1. The Visioning workshops were designed to solicit community input and begin to shape a "vision" for future reinvestment and development in the Cluster. Community stakeholders, including Cluster Board members, residents, business owners and others were invited to attend one of two visioning workshops. Workshops were structured to cover each of the six planning areas—housing, neighborhood commercial, job centers, transportation, environment and youth development—as well as special issues. Over 80 Cluster 1 stakeholders participated in the two workshops.

Community Visioning workshops began with an overview of existing Cluster conditions and issues, drawing on all of the data collected through surveys, Cluster Board Subcommittees and other sources. This overview was followed by a slide presentation designed to help participants begin to think "outside of the box" in terms of physical design and imagine a range of possibilities for reinvestment in the Cluster. Workshop participants were then broken into rotating groups to brainstorm and discuss visions for each planning area. This format provided an opportunity for participants to provide input into multiple planning areas. Finally, the large group was reconvened to briefly summarize the results of the small breakout groups. The information from the workshops then was analyzed and used to develop draft reinvestment recommendations for the Cluster.

Housing

Visioning workshop participants were asked to establish priorities for reinvestment, including identifying reinvestment target areas. Participants were also given an opportunity to indicate their preferences for housing and neighborhood amenities as well as the type and range and "mix" of housing values. Location preferences were indicated through placing adhesive dots on a map of the Cluster, taking into consideration influencing factors such as vacant land, and existing housing conditions.

In terms of housing reinvestment priorities, participants overwhelmingly supported a policy of maintaining existing neighborhoods wherever possible through a combination of repair, rehabilitation and "infill" housing development. Further, all Cluster neighborhoods should enjoy certain basic amenities such as local parks, access to retail goods and services within a reasonable distance and a range of other recreational and quality of life amenities. Participants also indicated their preference for remaining a primarily single family residential community.

Neighborhood Commercial Facilities

During the two visioning sessions, participants were asked to identify the retail and service needs of the Cluster, appropriate reuses for surplus commercially-zoned land, and where new or revitalized commercial development should locate and how commercial centers should look.

Participants identified a number of unmet commercial retail and service needs including, sit down family restaurants, entertainment centers and business supply stores. Participants wanted new and existing retail businesses to locate in consolidated small-scale commercial nodes adjacent to existing and planned new housing developments. Lastly, residents wanted surplus commercially-zoned land used for parks, gardens and greenways as well as for new institutional uses such as training/entrepreneur centers and multi-service centers.

Job Centers

Participants were asked what types of employers they would like to see expand in the Cluster and to identify the types of job training programs needed in the Cluster.

Residents indicated a need for more service industries to locate or expand their operations in the Cluster as well as high technology firms. Participants wanted more resident-owned businesses and so identified entrepreneurship training as needed in the community. Participants also expressed a preference for training programs that give residents computer skills in a range of job settings as well as an apprenticeship program in the skilled trades.

Transportation

Participants were asked to identify what changes they would like to see in mass transit in the Detroit metropolitan area during the next five to ten and 20 to 25 years. Residents were also asked to identify roads in the Cluster that they felt were most in need of repair.

A number of Cluster residents use the DDOT bus system to commute to work or school. Participants, both adults and youths, were adamant about the need for improved bus service. In addition to an improved and safer bus service, residents indicated a need for DDOT to increase the number commuting routes to job centers in the suburbs.

Participants identified a number of neighborhood and arterial roadways that need to be repaved. A list of the highest priority roads is included in the Reinvestment Recommendations section of this report.

Over the next 20 to 25 years, participants would like to see a trolley or light rail system developed in Detroit and the surrounding suburbs as well as a water taxi between Detroit and Windsor, Canada.

Environment

Participants identified ways that industrial businesses in the Cluster could be better “neighbors” and types of undesirable industries that the residents do not want located in the community.

Many of the environmental issues raised by Cluster residents involved concerns about human health risks. Cluster 1 has a large number of industrial businesses and residents are concerned about health risks associated with living in a heavily industrialized area. Participants expressed interest in working with businesses so that residents can be better informed about the hazardous substances that businesses use and in encouraging employers to use “waste minimization” technologies to reduce or eliminate the production of hazardous waste.

Residents believe that the Zoning Ordinance and other City policies encourage undesirable businesses to locate in the Cluster. Residents want to limit new light and medium industrial uses to the Renaissance Zones and areas identified by residents as sites for In-Place Industrial Parks. In addition, there are a few types of businesses that residents do not want in the Cluster, including: incinerators (industrial, hospital or other use); landfills and garbage disposal firms; chemical plants; and correctional facilities.

Youth Development

In each of the two Visioning workshops there were two Youth Development breakout groups, one for adults and another specifically for youth. In both groups the focus was primarily on identifying policy and programmatic reinvestment priorities. Adults and youth alike identified a number of youth related programs and services that should be developed or expanded within the Cluster. There was also brainstorming and discussion around the role of local recreation centers, schools and churches in the delivery of these programs and services. Brainstorming sessions were used to develop a vision for Cluster recreation centers, including thoughts on desired recreation center amenities.

Special Issues

The Cluster’s Special Issues, City Airport and the Michigan State Fair grounds, were treated somewhat differently during the Visioning workshops. Workshop participants were provided an opportunity to consider two scenarios related to the development or use of these sites. Participants voted on whether or not City Airport should be expanded and, if so, what types of development should occur in the surrounding community. There was also an opportunity for workshop participants to brainstorm ideas on possible uses for the Michigan State Fair grounds during the “off” season and in the event the State Fair no longer operates from that site. This information provided the basis for developing reinvestment recommendations which are described in the following section of this report.